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TAGS: [PREL](#) [NATO](#) [MOPS](#) [MARR](#) [MCAP](#) [PGOV](#) [CO](#) [AF](#)
SUBJECT: COLOMBIA'S PLANNED TROOP DEPLOYMENTS TO AFGHANISTAN

REF: A. STATE 120807; B. BOGOTA 3441

CLASSIFIED BY: William R. Brownfield, Ambassador; REASON: 1.4(A),
(B), (D)

SUMMARY

¶1. (S/NF) The Ambassador discussed the Government of Colombia's (GOC) plans to deploy troops to Afghanistan with Defense Minister Gabriel Silva Lujan on November 12 per ref A. MOD Silva suggested that the GOC is waiting to publicly announce its decision to send troops to Afghanistan until the USG announces its troop deployment decision. The GOC is considering three different types of contributions to Afghanistan (OEF, ISAF and police). While we believe that President Uribe remains committed to supporting our efforts in Afghanistan, his pique over perceived lack of U.S. support in Colombia's ongoing dispute with Venezuela (ref B) could derail the GOC's decision to provide troops for Afghanistan. End Summary.

U.S. SPECIAL FORCES DEPLOYMENT

¶2. (S/NF) The GOC initially plans to send a team of 38 Colombian Special Forces (COLSOF) members to Afghanistan with the 7th Special Forces Group of the U.S. Army under Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). The initial contingent will be comprised of two teams of 17, plus four liaison officers. The COLSOF members are expected to depart for Afghanistan no later than December 15 provided that the political decision is made by the GOC soon (otherwise the deployment could slip to June 2010). The Colombian troops have

already completed their training, SOUTHCOM and SOCOM have purchased the required equipment, and final technical arrangements are scheduled to be discussed with the GOC on December 2-3. Future Colombian deployments could raise the total to 72 Special Forces soldiers.

ISAF CONTRIBUTION

13. (S/NF) The GOC is also considering deploying additional troops to Afghanistan under NATO's ISAF, perhaps under Italian or German sponsorship. Initially the GOC was considering deploying under Spanish government sponsorship, but the Colombians are reportedly now reconsidering these plans due to the Spanish government's decision to sell military hardware to Venezuela. Some Colombian military officials are also irked that the Colombian forces would essentially be providing perimeter security for the Spanish troops, as opposed to the original plan to send a de-mining unit in support of ISAF.

COUNTER-DRUG SUPPORT

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14. (S/NF) Vice Minister of Defense Sergio Jaramillo has indicated that the GOC could provide future support to the Government of Afghanistan on narcotics interdiction, Special Forces training, interagency civilian government planning, and reconciliation. Jaramillo indicated that the Colombian National Police (CNP) could provide valuable experience and training on counter-drug activities.

COMMENT

15. (S/NF) Heightened tensions between Colombia and Venezuela since the October 24 murders of nine Colombians in Venezuela, followed by President Chavez' November 8 exhortations to Venezuelans to prepare for war, suspension of all bilateral trade, and the GBRV's November 19 destruction of two foot bridges crossing the Colombia-Venezuela border, have given rise to intense public and private complaints over perceived U.S. abandonment of its traditional ally, Colombia. Both the Foreign Minister and CNP Director have warned the Ambassador of the GOC perception that the USG had not spoken out in support of Colombia's reasoned handling of the situation. While we believe that President Uribe remains committed to supporting our efforts in Afghanistan, his pique over perceived lack of U.S. support in Colombia's ongoing dispute with Venezuela could derail the GOC's decision to provide troops for Afghanistan. End Comment.

BROWNFIELD